



December 5, 2019

Dear LK Alum:

My name is John Federico and I have served as the Executive Director of the Leadership Kansas Program since 2004. Together, with my staff of Liz Sosa, Lori Hogan and Diana Carlin (handling alumni relations), we have worked with the Kansas Chamber and the LK Board of Trustees to administer all aspects of the LK Program. I wanted to take the opportunity to both update you on the Program itself, and also offer up our sad goodbye to a Program that has had such deep meaning, and been a labor of love for Liz Sosa and I.

As you all should know by now, earlier this year the Kansas Chamber approached the Leadership Kansas Board of Trustees and informed them of their intention to “bring the LK Program in-house within the Chamber” and hire a Chamber staff person to run the LK Program, as well assume additional responsibilities within the Chamber. They also proposed changes to the Program to the LK Board of Trustees that they would like implemented in the 2020 Program. In part, those changes included:

- (1) the governance of the Program by changing the role and make-up of the LK Board
- (2) the make-up of the Selection Committee, the selection process, and the desired class composition, and
- (3) exercising more control and input on the topics and presenters for the local sessions.

Given the fact that LK is an *affiliate program* of the Chamber, they felt strongly that they were within their right to do so, and in fairness they believe that these changes are in the best interest of both the Chamber and the LK Program.

The LK Board had a different opinion however, and felt equally resolute that the changes proposed by the Chamber were not in the best interest of an otherwise successful Leadership Kansas program. The two sides set about negotiating a compromise, somewhere between the status quo of the Program you are familiar with, and the changes the Chamber wanted implemented.

As Executive Director, I offered the opinions of Liz, Lori and I, as it related to the proposed changes, and then we stepped back. As negotiations intensified, we were caught in the middle so we divorced ourselves from any further negotiations. We remained hopeful that a compromise could be met. But it appears both sides are at an impasse, and negotiations have appeared to have stopped, with a potential for future competing leadership programs.

To be clear and consistent, with the sentiments of our office and my staff and I, we do not begrudge the Chamber for doing what they feel is in their best interest, while also understanding and applauding the efforts of the majority of the LK Board of Trustees for fighting for what they

feel so strongly about, the preservation of the Program in a manner alumni were generally pleased with.

Throughout all of the negotiations, the Chamber graciously asked if Federico Consulting would be interested in extending our administrative contract for a short period of time to help transition the LK Program over to the Chamber. Again, we were consistent in suggesting that we wanted to see where the negotiations between LK and the Kansas Chamber led, and that yes, for the sake of the Program, we would be interested in continuing on but only if any eventual changes to the Program left us still feeling proud and passionate about Leadership Kansas.

We continued to be honest with the Chamber, and told them that we remained uncomfortable and confused about proposed efforts to change the diversity of the make-up of future classes. We had come to appreciate that the diversity of backgrounds, occupations, and opinions of class members...was easily the BEST part of the Leadership Kansas experience. We were concerned that part of the proposed changes to the Program included an interest in accommodating more private sector applications while setting caps for public sector applicants, regardless of the strength/merit of the persons' application.

So while we held out hope that at least THIS part might find a compromise, on Monday, in an about-face, I was informed via voicemail on my cell phone, that "it doesn't make sense for us to renew our contract." In a subsequent phone conversation, further explanation was offered that the Chamber wanted to "start anew" with both a new LK Board and a new Chamber-based Executive Director. I was surprised and disappointed that the conversation all came to an end so abruptly and the message was delivered in that manner.

Nonetheless, it is what it is, and with complete professionalism, we respect and accept the decision of the Kansas Chamber and per their desire we will not exercise the Option in our contract to renew our Administrative contract for the 2020 Program.

On December 31st we will walk away from a Program that has meant almost everything to Liz, Lori, Diana and I. In 2004 we inherited an expertly-run program from Jim Edwards, who ran it for 18 years. I am indebted to this man and every alum should be thankful for what he helped build. Our office put incredible effort and passion into this Program each and every year, paying attention to the smallest of details, and always with a goal of exceeding each class's expectations. We walk away proud of the work we did over the course of the last 15 years, in coordination with various volunteer Board Chairs and volunteer Board members to improve on an already great program. Some of the changes that have been implemented:

- Establishing a separate Orientation Session to help build camaraderie (Larry Berg)
- Increasing the class size from 35 to 40
- Establishing the Emerging Leaders Program
- Establishing the Young Professionals Program
- Establishing the LK Alumni Association
- Creating an annual alumni-only *Leadership Summit*
- Alumni-only VIP Trips to Washington DC
- Regional Receptions and unique Alumni Events (ie: Healthcare Summit)

In closing, it is not humanly possible to recognize and thank all of the people who have helped make this 41 year old program as successful as it is. My staff and I are just a small part of a tremendous network of LK alum that have given back to this tremendous Program. The sheer number of past and current Board members, State Program Chairs, Local Program Chairs, volunteers, contributors, Kansas Chamber staffers, presenters, class members...that we have had the great privilege to work with will not ever be forgotten. THANK YOU ALL.

I do not know what lay ahead for the Chamber program or perhaps a competing program, but I do know that the last 15 years we have spent with the “people of Leadership Kansas” has been life-changing for me, and in the truest and sincerest way possible,...it has been the honor of my life.

Goodbye and thank you.

John Federico